

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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C O N F I D E N T I A L CURACAO 0554

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, NA
SUBJECT: ARUBAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

REF: (A) CURACAO 0440; (B) CURACAO A-26; (C) CURACAO 0200

BEGIN SUMMARY: ARUBAN INDEPENDENCE LEADER BETICO CROES
TALKED HIMSELF INTO A CORNER WITH PRE- AND POST-ELECTION
ORATORY. NOW THERE IS MUCH NERVOUS APPREHENSION ABOUT WHAT
CROES WILL DO NEXT. POSSIBLE MOVES INCLUDE A GENERAL STRIKE
TO FORCE THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT TO INCLUDE CROES' PARTY,
A NEW INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM, AND SMALL ACTIONS AGAINST
PUBLIC ORDER. MORE ATTEMPTS AT GAINING INTERNATIONAL
SUPPORT APPEAR INEVITABLE. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER (AND INDEED BEFORE) THE RECENT NETHERLANDS ANTILLES
FEDERAL ELECTIONS (CURACAO 0440 AND CURACAO A-26) MEP
(MOVIMENTO ELECTORAL DI PUEBLO) LEADER CROES ISSUED A NUMBER
OF SANGUINARY STATEMENTS ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF MEP WERE
NOT INCLUDED IN THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT. AS EXPECTED,
THE MEP WAS NOT ASKED TO JOIN THE COALITION GOVERNMENT BEING
FORMED BY DP (PARTIDO DEMOCRAAT) LEADER, S.G.M. ROZENDAL.
NOW THE PRESSURE IS ON CROES TO DO SOMETHING, AND APPREHENSIONS
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ABOUT WHAT THAT SOMETHING WILL BE ARE RIFE. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING
THE ELECTION CROES MADE A HURRIED AND HIGHLY PUBLICIZED TRIP
TO UN AND TO WASHINGTON TO LOBBY FOR ARUBAN INDEPENDENCE.
NOW, OBSERVERS ARE WAITING FOR THE OTHER SHOE TO FALL. THEY
FEEL CROES MUST MAKE SOME KIND OF A MOVE TO SHOW HIS SUPPORTERS
THAT HE IS STILL THEIR LEADER IN THE ARUBAN INDEPENDENCE
MOVEMENT.

2. SPECULATIONS ON HOW CROES MIGHT RESPOND TO THIS SIUTATION RUN THROUGH A WIDE SPECTRUM. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE HE MAY BE CONSIDERING CALLING FOR A GENERAL STRIKE IN ARUBA TO PREVENT THE PPA (PARTIDO PATRIOTICA ARUBANA) FROM JOINING THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. THIS WOULD REDUCE ROZENDAL'S COALITION TO ELEVEN SEATS -- ONE SHORT OF THE MAJORITY -- AND IN EFFECT PARALYZE THE GOVERNMENT. CROES HAS ALREADY HINTED THAT THIS ACTION IS POSSIBLE, AND SOME ARUBANS CONFIDED THAT THEY FORESEE THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME "VIOLENCE AND STREET AGITATION" IF THE STRIKE OCCURS. THIS ACTIVITY WOULD BE DIRECTED PRIMARILY AGAINST THE PPA AND ITS SUPPORTERS, WHO ARE BEING CAST IN THE ROLE OF "BLOCKING THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY" (FOR ARUBAN INDEPENDENCE FROM THE REST OF THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES).

3. OTHERS SEE CROES CALLING FOR A REAL ARUBAN REFERENDUM ON SUBJECT OF INDEPENDENCE. SUCH A REFERENDUM WOULD BE OF QUESTIONABLE LEGALITY. BUT SINCE THE MEP CONTROLS THE ISLAND GOVERNMENT, THE REFERENDUM COULD PROBABLY BE HELD.

4. A FOURTH LINE OF SPECULATION FORESEES ISOLATED SMALL ACTIONS AGAINST PUBLIC AND ECONOMIC ORDER TO SHOW THAT WITHOUT ARUBA'S LARGEST PARTY (MEP) CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CANNOT EFFECTIVELY GOVERN.

COMMENT. IT IS YET TOO EARLY TO SEE CLEARLY WHAT COURSE
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CROES WILL PURSUE. TWO THINGS ARE CLEAR: CROES CERTAINLY SEEMS TO HAVE PUT HIMSELF IN A POSITION OF HAVING TO TAKE SOME ACTION TO FOLLOW UP ON HIS BLUSTERING STATEMENTS OR APPEAR TO BE ONLY A BLOWHARD. AND THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF NERVOUS APPREHENSION ABOUT WHAT ACTION HE MIGHT NOW TAKE. AS CURACAO HAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (CURACAO 200), WHATEVER ACTION CROES MAY DECIDE UPON, IF ANY, WE CAN BE SURE THAT HE WILL CONTINUE TO TRY TO GAIN INTERNATIONAL, AND SPECIFICALLY UN, SUPPORT FOR ARUBAN INDEPENDENCE. BEST USG COURSE OF ACTION CONTINUES TO BE THAT OF AN ABSOLUTELY NEUTRAL SIDE LINE OBSERVER OF A PROBLEM THAT IS AN INTERNAL AFFAIR OF KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS.
PENBERTHY

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